

# LODI HISTORIAN

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## EARLY CLEMENTS

by Ralph Lea & Janice Roth

The town of Clements was one of many in California that was started when the railroad passed through the area. Long before the rails George Poland established the Poland House Stage Stop on the route from Stockton to the southern mines on the south side of the Mokelumne River in 1852. Five years later Christen Megerle had a house and a hotel about two miles west of Poland.

Hodge and Terry built a flour mill on the south side of the Mokelumne River in the north-east section of San Joaquin County. The

mill burned in 1856, was immediately rebuilt and named the Lone Star Mill after David S. Terry's home state of Texas.

The notorious Judge Terry purchased three sections of land south of the mill in Elliott Township. This is the same David S. Terry that was mayor of Stockton in 1850, dueled with David Broderick and later was shot and killed at Lathrop. Terry sold the mill to Stillman L. Magee who ran the mill from 1861-1885.

A two story brick schoolhouse was built about a quarter mile from

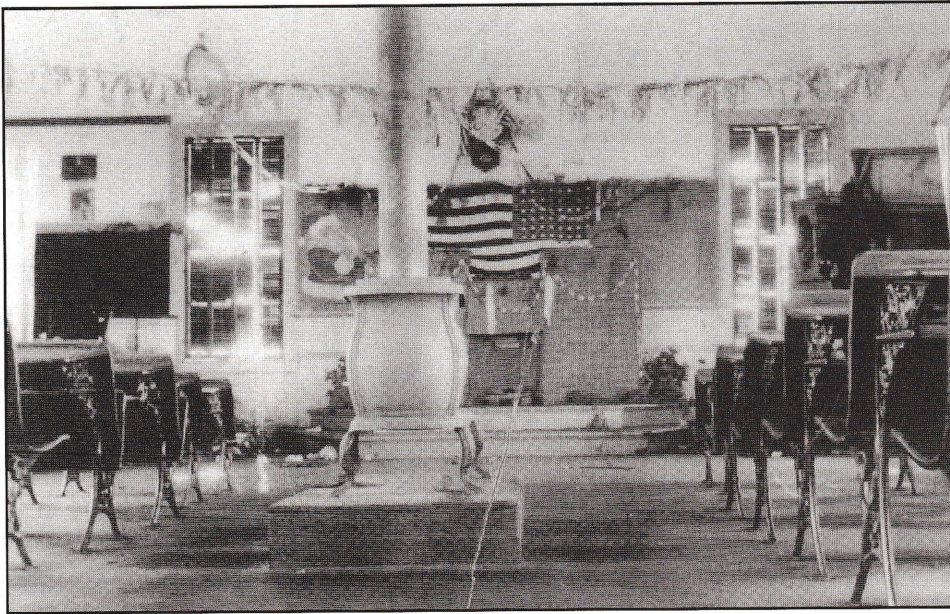
the future town of Clements on S.L.Magee land. The Athearn School was named for the early pioneer farmer, Prince Athearn, and was built entirely from bricks made on the Thomas Clements Ranch. One of the first teachers at Athearn School was Mrs. Hornshell followed by Miss Hammond, Amy Stowe and W.R. Stone. Church services were also held in the school with Rev. Pasco a Congregational Minister of Lockeford officiating.

Thomas Clements was born in Ireland in 1837, came to California at



▲ Two twelve mule teams pulling two grain wagons each, circa 1920.





▲ Justice School, built in 1869 at Dogtown. Photo circa 1900.

age 20 and settled in Ione. Clements married Jennie Sprott, also born in Ireland, and in 1871 purchased Judge Terry's property consisting of three sections south of the Mokelumne River and three miles east of Lockeford.

In 1878 Lukins established a blacksmith shop and home near the future town of Clements.

On January 7, 1882 the committee to build a narrow gauge railroad from Brack's Landing to Woodbridge, Lodi, Lockeford and Camanche met. Thomas Clements and Charles Bamert were included in the planning.

Building of the railroad started on April 22, 1882, and by August thirty miles of tracks were laid passing Clements and nearing the Calaveras County Line. Thomas Clements dedicated land 60 feet wide for the new railroad plus land for a depot for passengers and freight. The town streets, lots and blocks were established with the railroad to share a portion of the lots. In the new town of Clements the depot and holding corral were built by the railroad. P.W. Compton was the agent for the railroad.

Having completed the layout of the town, Thomas Clements sold some lots for homes and built three

two story brick buildings side by side on the north side of Main street.

Moses Bruml, Lockeford merchant, and Charles Bamert opened a General Merchandise Store in the western most brick building. The middle building was partitioned into three sections. The west section was a candy store, the middle section a butcher shop and the east section J.R. Young's Saloon. The third two story brick building was the George Ringer Hotel, Bar and Barber Shop.

The top floor of the General Store had two apartments and the second story of the butcher shop was a Community Hall and dance floor.

In 1883, The Farmers Trade Union was formed with Charles Bamert as manager replacing

the Bruml-Bamert Store. Seraphin S. Marceau moved into the Ringer Hotel adding a restaurant to the saloon downstairs. Grain buyer, Waterman, opened a General Store on the south side of Main Street and east of the depot.

James A. Anderson moved from Sacramento to Clements and started a large nursery on Clements property and managed the warehouse. He built his house on the hill south of town. In 1887 Anderson moved to Lodi and opened a fruit shed after selling his nursery to Iddings and Cotton.

There were four blacksmith shops in early Clements. The Clements Shop at the west end of Main Street, the Magee Shop on the east end where the I.O.O.F. Building now stands, the Hahn and Christy Shop was south of the highway next to the cattle



▲ Athearn School, built in 1877 on Magee property with Clements bricks. The porch was added about 1895.





Clements' Main Street, 1912. ▲



▲  
Frank B. Schmitt, Clements' railroad  
agent after 1910.

corrals another shop was operated by S. W. Hackett and John Breeze. By 1884, John Baker, Moses Martel, D. Stennett and Alfred Siegel were all working at the Clements Shop as blacksmiths. The Magee shop employed Tom Hackett, William Breeze and Dan Hodges. Other blacksmiths were Henry Figge, W. Stoven, Frank Gale House, W. Draper, E. Murphy, Joe Glenn and George Buchanan in



▲ Schmitt's store at the old corner, 1889. Built by Frederick William Schmitt, it later burned and was rebuilt by his son, Louis Schmitt.

the 1900's; Frank and George Harington in the 1920's; Steve Baracchiglione was the lone blacksmith in the 1930's.

There were at least two carriage and wagon makers when Clements was in its infancy they were Sam

Hackett and James Jenkins. The livery stables were operated by Fraser, Phipps and George Jerome. By 1884 Charles Poppe had his Louisiana Livery Stable so named because Poppe had won a lottery from the southern state. Herman Batzer was





▲ Clements, circa 1920. Note the farm implement shop at far left; next is the Chrisman & Clements General Store; ice cream and candy store; and the Clements Hotel at far right.



▲ Clements Depot, 1920. The passenger cars would run for four more years. Fackrell was the agent at this time.



▲ Clarence Reasoner and Joe Steely built this garage with concrete building blocks (Lodi Perrin type) between Clements Blacksmith Shop and Chrisman-Clements Store. Photo Courtesy of Joe Disch

one of the last to operate a stable in Clements.

Starting on Friday, November 3, 1893 Clements had its own newspaper, *The Weekly Tidings*, with H.M. Calkins as editor. The first edition had the dubious job of reporting the funeral of the towns founder, 56 year old Thomas Clements. Clements left a widow Jennie, two daughters- Margaret and Minnie and two sons, John H. and George R. Clements. The funeral cortege of 134 teams of horses processed from the Presbyterian Church that Clements had helped to build in 1890, to the Glen View Cemetery on land that Thomas Clements and Stilman Magee had donated.

Before his death Thomas Clements gave the building between his store and the hotel to his sisters, Mrs. Anna Tice and Miss Matilda Clements, in exchange for other property. They sold the property to Harry Miser about 1904 and he later sold to John and Henry Cavagnaro.

After Charles Bamert died in 1891, *The Trade Union General Store* had new owners, Henry Crabtree,



George Earl and Anson Prouty.

Two years later Friedberger & Kaiser took over the Waterman Store south of the highway and Waterman moved to the the Clements Store. This arrangement only lasted a few years and musical chairs start again. Leo Friedberger replaced the partnership of Friedberger & Kaiser and moves into the Clements Store. In 1907 George Cristman and George Clements, son of Thomas, buy the store business from Leo Friedberger. After thirty years Cristman sells his interest in the General Merchandise Store to his partner George Clements. About 1941 the business became the Red and White Store, a locally owned chain store. Four years later George Clements retires and the Art Burgers, their daughter and son-in-law take over management and later ownership of the Red and White Store.

In 1889 Fredrick William Schmitt builds a two story building at the "corner" where he has a general store on the lower floor with living quarters on the top floor. He runs the store until his death in 1916. His son then takes over until 1925 followed by Herbert Ayers and in 1938 Pete

Kroencke leased the building and later buys the store adding a bar, diner and gasoline station.

In 1946 Huer erects a building for Haley & Fitzgerald to house the H & F Market with Fitzgerald as manager. Nine years later a new store next to the hotel opened. The Lucky Thrifty Market had Mr. & Mrs. R. Lucke as proprietors.

The Confectionery-Candy Store held its place in Clements and one of the first proprietors was Alfred Preater who also sold stationery. He was followed by Iddings and Bob Baird and later Mrs. Hansel. In 1909 Mrs. Batzer and Mrs. Allie Russel were proprietors. Russel left four years later and Mr. & Mrs. Herman Batzer operated the store until 1943 when Ed & Lula Thompson remodeled, enlarged and started serving lunches. Mr. & Mrs. Fred Butler took over and renamed it the O.K. Coffee Shop.

Mr. Brown was the first barber in Clements and operated inside the Marceau Hotel in 1884 followed by Mike Cencirulo. Other barbers were Joe Siegel who had a shop where



Mackville Bridge, spanning the Mokelumne River; ▲ Lone Star Mill on the right.

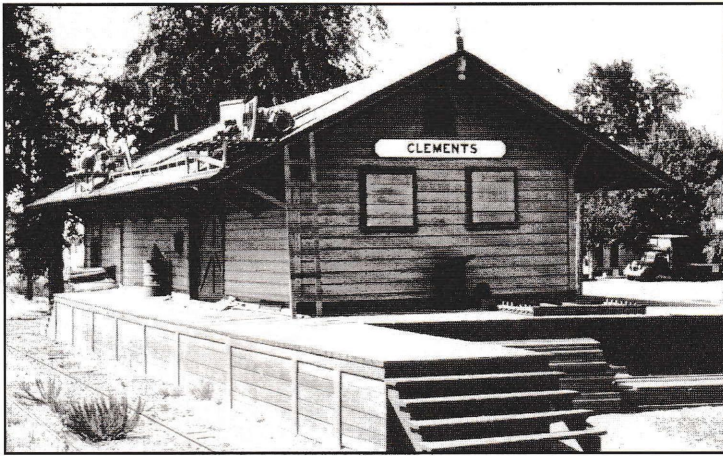
Reasoner's Garage was located and Charles Stemler was in Clements until 1912 then moved to Lockeford and later to Lodi. Millard F. Smart bought Stemler's shop in the building between the Clements Store & Hotel where he stayed for five years. When Pete Kroencke went into the shop in 1921 he served meals in the back part of the shop. Jess Dalton purchased the shop in 1930 and added card and pool tables. Later barbers were Bill McCulloch and Millard Smart.

The butchers of Clements had a slaughter house in the bottom land



Tank wagons, center, and the Clements-Stockton stage on the far right, circa 1920. ▲





▲ The Clements Depot shown in 1940, two years after shutting down. In the early 1950's the depot was sold and moved and the railroad replaces the steam engines with diesel.

north of town. Edgar Prouty, H.B. Stamper and Henry Black were all in the shop located in the Clements Building between the Clements Store and Hotel. Later, John Yuill, who had a shop in Woodbridge, came to the Clements Building followed by Henry Plummer and Jeff Giles. Henry Ward and Francis Henry came in the 1900's followed by Francisco Broglio and then Louis R. Plasse who started about 1913 and cut meat until almost 1940. David Dorman worked for Plasse and Tracy Clifton until the Chrisman Clements Estate closed the shop.



▲ The old IOOF Hall in Clements was formerly the Clements Blacksmith shop, later the fire house.

The town of Clements had a Farmers Telephone Line by 1906 and six years later electricity was in use.

Frank Athearn was one of the first to purchase an automobile. His Studebaker E.M.F. was well known in the area. Some said

the letters stood for "every morning fix-it".

By 1912, Bert Gaskill converted his plumbing shop to a garage. Three years later the garage burned and Gaskill built the sheet metal building that later became Huers Garage. Bert's brother, Allan, worked for Gaskill along with Joe Francisco, H. Struckmanm J. Baker, R. Brandt and Henry Heuer. In 1932, Gaskill rented the garage to Jim Heuer who had the Chevrolet Agency. His brother, Bill Heuer, worked at the agency. Others working at the shop were Leih, Hessencamp, Roth and his son Elbert.

Clarence Reasoner and Joe Steely built a garage in 1921. Steely dropped out eight years later and was replaced with G. Swans and Emil Rodgers who later had his own shop south of the railroad at the west end of town.

The U.S. Post Office in Clements was established on October 9, 1882 in the Bruml & Bamert Store. Charles Bamert was the first postmaster followed by Will Whipple and George Earl, who moved the Post Office to a small building where Reasoner's Garage would later stand. Dr. & Mrs. Priestly had the Post Office in the building where the H & F Store started. In 1893 Celia Gillies was appointed Post Mistress and

moved the office to the Friedberger Store. Celia had the job until her death on October 14, 1933. Will Athearn followed and the Post Office moved to the site of the future Lucky Thrift Market.

Clements was fortunate to have Jim Priestly, Physician, Surgeon & Druggist in town as early as 1884. His office was next to the hotel until he purchased Anderson's Hill House where he built a small office building. Other doctors were Dr. Edward Grant practicing in Clements from 1885-1891, Dr. Pendry 1895 and Dr. Edgar Arthur in the early 1900's. Shortly after the death of Dr. Priestly in 1907, Dr. James Brown came to town and opened a practice.

In 1882 Seraphin Marceau had his San Joaquin and Sierra Nevada house on the south side of the main road. The same year George Ringer and J.R. Young opened the Clements Hotel on the north side.

Two years later Marceau sold to J. O'Keefe and he moved into the Ringer (Clements) Hotel building and stayed there until Charlie Poppe bought the hotel in 1890. Five years later Will Renny came to Clements and operated the hotel for the next 18 years.

Mr. A. Galluzzi bought the hotel 1922 and was open for business until 1943 when Mr. & Mrs. Doc Davis rented the hotel, bar and restaurant as well as the adjoining building to the west to expand the dining room. He operated the establishment until his death in 1952. Many people remember his donkey that had the run of the bar and dining area.

Baseball was thriving in many towns in the area. Some of the local players in 1890 were Anderson, Ford, Bottimore, Langford, Crabtree, Mehrten, Athearn, Winters and Prouty. By 1898 George. Whipple, Charlie Murdoch, Clarence Fore, Prince and Will Athearn were also engaged in this sport.

Organized community May Day Picnics started in 1884 and were held



at the foot of the bluff just north of town. The train would leave Stockton early in the morning, stop at Lodi to change trains from a standard to narrow gauge, and then continue on to Lockeford with as many as ten passenger railroad cars. There would be a parade out to the picnic grounds with band music. They always had baseball, races, dancing on a covered dance floor, and a merry-go-round. Later they had May Pole Dancing with Mr. Bryant in charge of the school children. The barbeque at noon time was always a treat and the proceeds provided extra funds for the Presbyterian Church. There was always a baseball game between local rival teams followed by a meal in the Clements Warehouse at 6 pm.

The Clements Community Picnics were discontinued about 1905, but



▲ Scattered over California during World War II were observation points located about seven miles apart where volunteers observed airplanes flying and reported by phone the direction of flight and type of plane. Clements' men are shown moving their building to a good spot. Leland Disch, Del Atkins, Lee Bluck, Bill Clasen and W. Breitenbucher helping out.

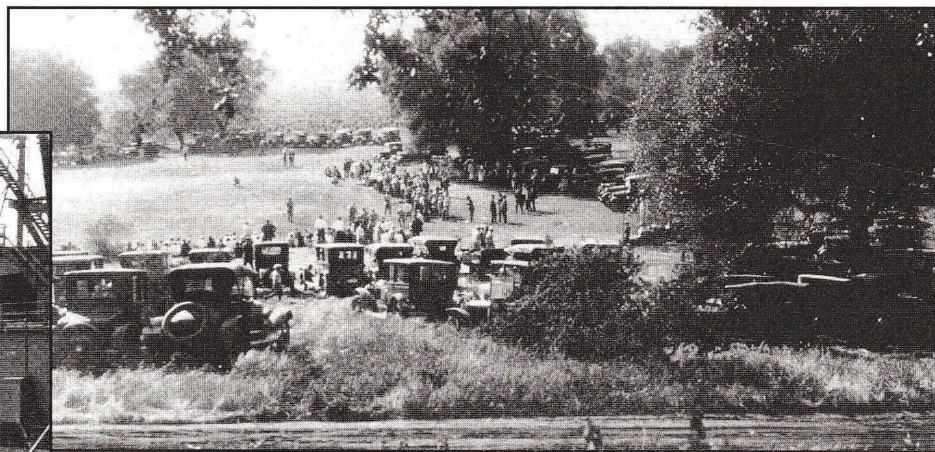
Photo Courtesy of Joe Disch



▲ Dredging for gold next to the old Lone Star Mill in Clements, circa 1949.

the Odd Fellows and other lodges continued for another twenty years providing funds to purchase a new carpet and other improvements for the hall above the Clements Blacksmith Shop.

The first organized fire protection began when the Clements area raised private money for a new 1931 Dodge Fire Truck. The truck was kept in Bert Gaskill's building and he was the driver. The fire department was

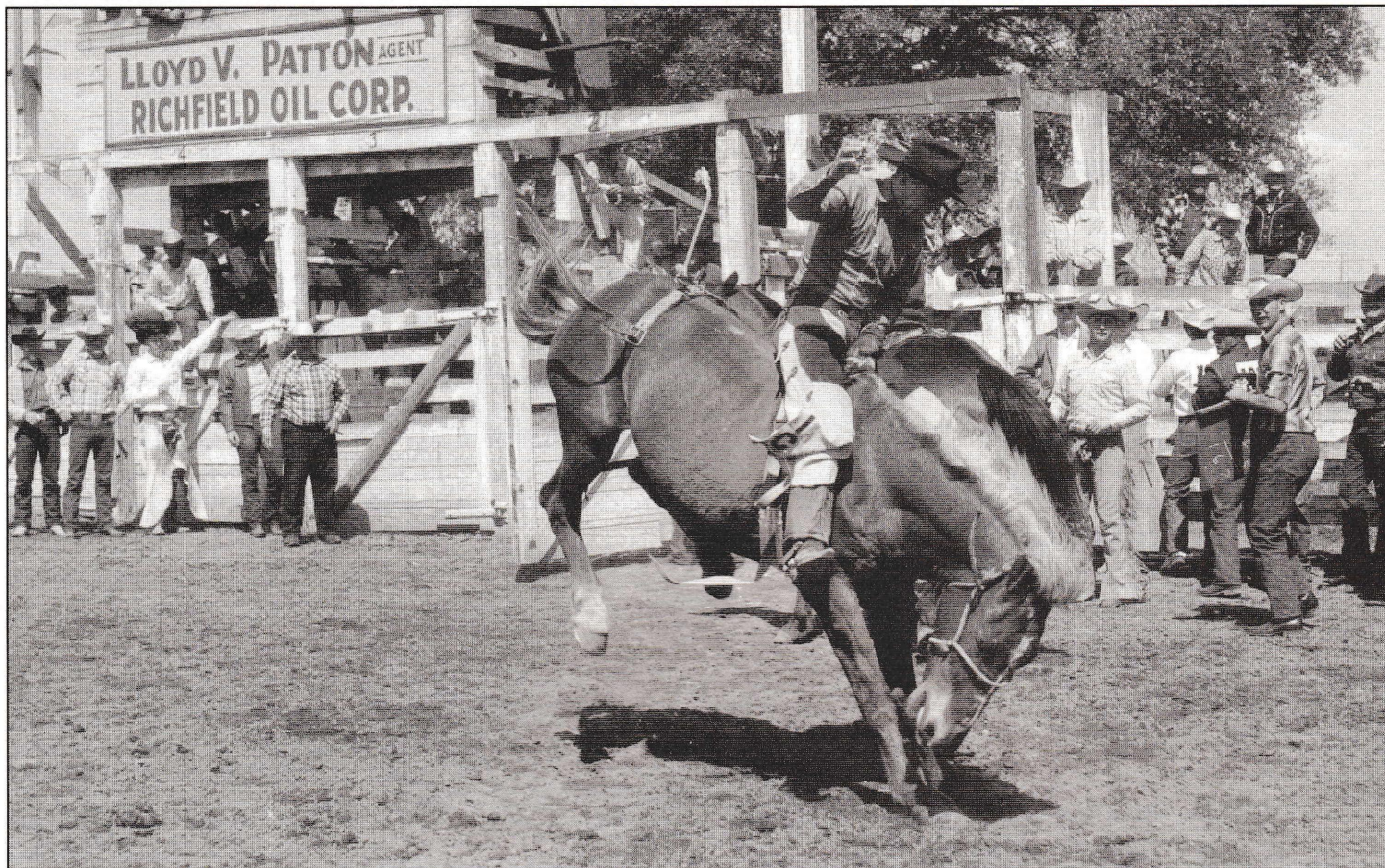


Lodi American Legion Picnic held May 1, 1926 in Clements at the old picnic site. ▲



▲ Clements Union School, built in 1940, snow in 1960.





▲ Clements Buckaroos was started by local ranchers and families. In 1942, just after the start of World War II, a Stampede was held with local participants. The next year the show expanded involving the Marine Corps League and selling war bonds. Photo courtesy of Lodi News Sentinel



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made up of all volunteers and no fire chief. George Chrisman was in charge of issuing burning permits. Later Clarence Reasoner was appointed chief. The Clements Rural Fire District was formed in 1941 by a vote of property owners who elected John Steely, President; Elwood Myers, Vice President; Joe Steely, Secretary; Warren Breitenbucher and Albert Hart, Directors. By 1948 the department had a high pressure pumper and remodeled the old Clements Blacksmith Shop into a Firehouse.



▲ The Clements Hotel built in 1882 and operated by Carmela and Doc Davis, 1943-1952. It was purchased by Dick O'Connor and burned October, 1959.

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